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East Los Angeles-Area High School Students To Meet Cal Poly Professor, Author, SLO Poet Laureate Gloria Velásquez March 4

SAN LUIS OBISPO – A group of 15 students from Roosevelt High School in East Los Angeles are planning a trip to San Luis Obispo Saturday, March 4, to meet with Cal Poly professor and award-winning author Gloria Velásquez.

Velásquez, widely known for her Roosevelt High School Series of young adult novels, will have lunch with the students, take them on a tour of her home, and answer questions about the novels they read. This segment of the visit will be filmed for the "Aqui" television program hosted by José Remus.

"As a humanitarian, it has always been my dream to inspire social change through my teaching, my poetry, my music and my fiction," said Velásquez. "I am absolutely thrilled that these young students are inspired by my words, that I have empowered them to strive for social awareness, to read about issues that I deeply care about."

Velásquez's RHS books focus on a group of multiracial teenagers who are confronted with a variety of social and cultural issues ranging from violence and sexuality to teen pregnancy and prejudice. Her seventh and most recent novel in the RHS series, "Tyrone's Betrayal," features an African American teenager. The book is expected to be published in October 2006.

Roosevelt High School social studies teacher Gustavo Reynoso will accompany the students, along with an assistant principal and several other teachers. Reynoso's students have been reading Velásquez's book in his high school Breakfast Club, which meets weekly before classes to discuss the books. The club is part of a "small learning community" led by Reynoso titled Social Awareness Leadership and Education Academy, one of the 13 such learning groups at Roosevelt High.

Velásquez, of San Luis Obispo, has been teaching Chicano literature and culture at Cal Poly since 1985. She was named San Luis Obispo's eighth poet laureate in fall 2005. Her poetry has been published in two volumes, "I Used to Be a Superwoman" and "Xicana on the Run."

Stanford University, where she earned a Ph.D. in Latin American and Chicano literatures, has archived her writings, alongside those of John Steinbeck.

For more information, contact Velásquez at 756- 2992 or gvelasqu@calpoly.edu.

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